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**CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

1. (Currently amended) A system, comprising:

- a plurality of agents capable of receiving and sending formatted information from and to device groups, each of the device groups comprising devices capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols via a network, the formatted information organized according to a pre-defined syntax; and
- a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism connecting to the plurality of agents via the network, the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism capable of coalescing the formatted information received from the plurality of agents, the pre-defined syntax of the formatted information being recognized by the plurality of agents and the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism further coalescing the formatted information within a coalesced file and synchronizing the coalesced file according to corresponding priority rules defined with respect to each of the plurality of agents, the synchronized coalesced file then being processed to generate an updated coalesced file.

2. (Currently amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein each of the agents is associated with one of the a-device groups, each device group that comprises comprising at least one device and collectsing information from the at least one device in the device group.

3. (Previously presented) The system according to claim 2, wherein each of the plurality of agents comprises:

- a device interface for interacting with the at least one device in the device group to collect information;
- an information formatting mechanism for organizing the information, collected by the device interface from the at least one device, according to the pre-defined syntax to generate the formatted information; and

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a network communication mechanism for communicating with the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, sending the formatted information to the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism via the network.

4. (Currently amended) A priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, comprising:
  - a network communication mechanism for receiving formatted information from an agent coupled to a device group comprising devices capable of running on a plurality of platforms using a plurality of protocols, the formatted information generated according to a pre-defined syntax;
  - a priority rule database for storing priority rules defined with respect to the agent; and
  - a coalescing mechanism for coalescing and synchronizing the formatted information in a coalesced file according to the priority rules retrieved from the priority rule database, the pre-defined syntax of the formatted information being recognized by the agent and the coalescing mechanism, the coalescing mechanism further capable of generating an updated coalesced file.
5. (Original) The mechanism according to claim 4, further comprising:
  - a priority rule set-up mechanism for setting up the priority rules for the agent, the priority rules defining the priority of the agent;
  - a priority rule accessing mechanism for retrieving the priority rules, from the priority rule database after the formatted information is received from the agent, to provide associated priority rules to the coalescing mechanism to coalesce the formatted information.
6. (Previously presented) The mechanism according to claim 5, further comprising:
  - a coalesced file initialization mechanism for initializing the coalesced file to which the agent appends formatted information;
  - a parsing mechanism for parsing the priority rules, retrieved by the priority rule access mechanism from the priority rule database, before the coalescing mechanism coalesces the formatted information;

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a transformation mechanism for transforming the formatted information, before the formatted information is coalesced by the coalescing mechanism, according to the priority rules; and  
a coalesced file database for storing the updated coalesced file, generated by the coalescing mechanism.

7. (Currently amended) A method, comprising:

sending, by a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, an inquiry to an agent to gather information from a device group associated with the agent, the device group comprising devices capable of running on a plurality of platforms using a plurality of protocols;  
collecting, by the agent, the information from the device group according to the inquiry;  
constructing formatted information based on the information obtained from the device group according to a pre-defined syntax;  
sending the formatted information to the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism;  
retrieving, by the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the sending an inquiry includes sending the inquiry with a coalesced file.

9. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 8, wherein the sending the formatted information comprises:

appending the formatted information, generated by the constructing, to the coalesced file; and  
sending the coalesced file, appended with the formatted information, to the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism.

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10. (Original) The method according to claim 7, wherein the constructing according to a pre-defined syntax includes constructing according to XML.

11. (Currently amended) A method for a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, comprising:

sending an inquiry to an agent to gather information from a device group associated with the agent, the device group comprising devices capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols;  
receiving formatted information from the agent, formatted information being constructed according to a pre-defined syntax;  
retrieving priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 11, wherein the sending an inquiry includes sending the inquiry with a coalesced file.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12, wherein the receiving the formatted information includes receiving the formatted information with the coalesced file wherein the formatted information is appended.

14. (Currently amended) A method, comprising:

receiving, by an agent associating with a device group that comprises ~~at least one~~ devices capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols, ~~information pertaining to the devices from a device of the at least one device;~~  
constructing formatted information based on the information received from the ~~devices~~ according to a pre-defined syntax;  
sending the formatted information to a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism;  
retrieving, by the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and

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coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an update coalesced file.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein the coalescing the formatted information comprises:

coalescing the formatted information with respect to a coalesced file according to the priority rules; and  
generating the updated coalesced file based on the result from the coalescing.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 14, further comprising:

setting up the priority rules associated with the agent prior to the retrieving; and  
transforming the formatted information prior to the coalescing formatted information according to the priority rules.

17. (Currently amended) A method for a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, comprising:

receiving formatted information from an agent associated with a device group comprising ~~at least one devices~~ capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols, formatted information being constructed based on the information, obtained from ~~a device of the at least one the devices~~, according to a pre-defined syntax;  
retrieving priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the coalescing the formatted information comprises:

coalescing the formatted information with respect to a coalesced file according to the priority rules; and  
generating the updated coalesced file based on the result from the coalescing.

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19. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 17, further comprising:  
setting up the priority rules associated with the agent prior to the retrieving; and  
transforming the formatted information prior to the coalescing according to the  
priority rules associated with the agent.
20. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with a program,  
the program, when executed causing:  
sending, by a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, an inquiry to an agent to  
gather information from a device group associated with the agent;  
collecting, by the agent, the information from the device group according to the  
inquiry;  
constructing formatted information based on the information obtained from the device  
group according to a pre-defined syntax;  
sending the formatted information to the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism;  
retrieving, by the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, priority rules associated  
with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an  
updated coalesced file.
21. (Previously presented) The medium according to claim 20, wherein the sending of  
the formatted information comprises:  
appending the formatted information, generated by the constructing, to a coalesced  
file that is received together with the inquiry; and  
sending the coalesced file, appended with the formatted information, to the priority  
rule-based coalescing mechanism.
22. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with a program  
for a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, the program, when executed causing:  
sending an inquiry to an agent to gather information from a device group associated  
with the agent, the device group comprising devices capable of running on a  
plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols;

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receiving formatted information from the agent, formatted information being constructed according to a pre-defined syntax;  
retrieving priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

23. (Original) The medium according to claim 22, wherein  
the sending an inquiry includes sending the inquiry with a coalesced file;  
the receiving the formatted information includes receiving the formatted information with the coalesced file wherein the formatted information is appended.

24. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with a program, the program, when executed, causing:

receiving, by an agent associating with a device group that comprises ~~at least one devices~~ capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols, information from ~~a device of the at least one the devices~~;  
constructing formatted information based on the information received from the ~~devices~~ according to a pre-defined syntax;  
sending the formatted information to a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism;  
retrieving, by the priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and  
coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

25. (Original) The medium according to claim 24, further comprising code, which when executed causes:

setting up the priority rules associated with the agent prior to the retrieving; and  
transforming the formatted information prior to the coalescing formatted information according to the priority rules.

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26. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with a program for a priority rule-based coalescing mechanism, the program, when executed, causing:

receiving formatted information from an agent associated with a device group comprising ~~at least one~~ devices capable of running on a plurality of different platforms using a plurality of different protocols, formatted information being constructed based on the information, obtained from ~~a device of the at least one~~ devices, according to a pre-defined syntax;

retrieving priority rules associated with the agent from a priority rule database; and coalescing the formatted information based on the priority rules to generate an updated coalesced file.

27. (Previously presented) The medium according to claim 26, further comprising code, which when executed causes:

setting up the priority rules associated with the agent prior to the retrieving; and transforming the formatted information prior to the coalescing according to the priority rules associated with the agent.